

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2023



FROM THE ACvA LEADERSHIP

It's the end of another big year at ACvA. As a national organisation, we're lucky enough to have active members and initiatives in all jurisdictions and it was a pleasure to meet with so many of you both face-to-face and virtually over the past 12 months. Our Flagships, Committees, Cardiovascular Health Leadership Research Forum and Clinical Theme Initiatives are strengthened by their national membership as well as the diverse cross-sectoral involvement.

We started the year in **New South Wales**, holding the 2022 ACvA Excellence in Cardiovascular Research Awards in **Sydney**. We returned to **Melbourne** for the ACvA Roadshow La Trobe University, ACvA Roadshow Victorian Heart Hospital, the Clinical Lipidomics Symposium Think Tank, an Atrial Fibrillation Clinical Theme Workshop and just last week, the final Hypertension Taskforce meeting of the year and the ACvA Precision Medicine Flagship Symposium which you can read more about in the following pages.

The Australian Capital Territory was another regular destination including the Parliamentary Friends of Heart and Stroke Foundations- launch of Heart Failure resources, New CVD Risk Guideline launch, our own ACvA Strategy Day and the MRFF Cardiovascular Mission Showcase co-hosted by ACvA and the Department of Health and Aged Care.

It was great to visit **Tasmania** to hold a Tasmania Data Dashboard Workshop at the Menzies Institute in **Hobart**. This initiative was identified by the **Cardiovascular Health Leadership Research Forum** as a priority area for local work with the potential for national scale.

We had ongoing involvement with **South Australia** giving advice & support in the establishment of SACVRN, co-facilitating a panel session at the SAHMRI symposium and visiting **Adelaide** in August for our Joint National EMCR Summit with the National Heart Foundation of Australia and CSANZ at the University of South Australia. That was followed by a booth at the CSANZ ASM and a CEO presentation at the CSANZ nursing symposium.

In **Western Australia**, ACvA worked with WACRA on a joint project to identify capacity gaps in WA to provide evidence to support advocacy to the WA Government for increased funding and workforce sustainability.

Our CEO Kerry Doyle PSM OAM is a member of the **Queensland** Cardiovascular Research Network Management Committee and our immediate past president Professor Gemma Figtree, spoke at their gala and showcase in **Brisbane**.

We've had continual liaison with the **Northern Territory** Government and support from them for the ACvA model.

It was wonderful to visit **Wollongong** this year for an ACvA Roadshow at the University of Wollongong. We also visited **Newcastle** last Friday to celebrate the Cardio-Oncology Team's win in the HMRI Awards. There's been close liaison with the **New South Wales** Office of Health

& Medical Research, attendance at the NSWCVRN Showcase, involvement with the NSW Cardiovascular Capacity Building Program advisory committee and NICM External Advisory Group. We've also been in **Sydney** for the first Hypertension Clinical Theme Workshop, the World Heart Federation EMCR Forum and most recently, the ACvA Frailty & Heart Failure Workshop.

We hope the next few weeks offer you a chance to spend time with family and friends and we'll see you again in 2024. Wishing you all a safe and joyful holiday and new year.

ACvA Operations will shut down 22 December and be back in the office 4 January 2024.

ACvA ACTIVITIES

Welcome to ACvA's new President and Board Directors

Following from the AGM held on 23 November, we welcome Professor Jason Kovacic as the new ACvA President. Professor Kovacic brings with him extensive leadership experience and a broad network which will support the national and international connectivity of the ACvA.

Professor Kovacic has been a Board Director since 2020. He is also the Executive Director of the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, a Cardiologist at St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, Professor of Medicine at the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, and a Board Member of the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes.

We'd like to thank outgoing President Professor Figtree, for her leadership, unwavering dedication, and profound passion for the promotion and advocacy of cardiovascular and stroke research.

We'd also like to thank Associate Professor Christina Bursill and Professor Chris Sobey who are retiring as Board Directors this year. Professor Bursill served as ACvA Treasurer and will now focus her talent and energy on the South Australian Cardiovascular Research Network. Professor Sobey, who was recently named Australia's Leading Researcher in Pharmacology and Pharmacy by Research Magazine 2024, will continue to serve on our Remunerations and Nominations Committee.



We welcome Professor Peter Meikle and Dr Rochelle Wynne onto the ACvA Board.

Frailty & Heart Failure Clinical Theme Workshop

On 16 November, we hosted a National Workshop on Frailty and Heart Failure bringing together key thought leaders from across the country to collectively set an ambitious goal to improve patient outcomes and enhance the quality of life for those living with frailty and heart failure. This is part of a broader initiative launched by our Heart Failure Clinical Theme following a national consultation in 2021 to address unmet needs in cardiovascular disease and stroke. This initiative is driven by the recognition that tackling these challenges requires national, collaborative, multidisciplinary approaches that leverage the collective expertise of leading researchers and stakeholders from across the country.

It was a fascinating afternoon with Professors Jamie Vandenberg, Patricia Davidson and Peter Macdonald setting the scene. It was an opportunity to hear from people with lived experience, and leading researchers in the fields of Cardiology, Geriatrics, Nursing, Allied Health, Pharmacology, Basic science and government policy experts.



We'd like to thank James Gleeson for sharing his heart transplant journey and Wesley Martin for speaking about his experience with heart failure.



Dr Julee McDonagh and Professor Caleb Ferguson (University of Wollongong) discussed the challenges posed by Frailty & Heart Failure including the physical, psychological and social impacts frailty has on heart failure as well as health more broadly.

Professor Lindsay Wu (UNSW) spoke on behalf of Professor Andy Philp (Centenary Institute) about the biology of ageing and frailty.

Professor Ruth Hubbard (The University of Queensland) presented on routine screening for frailty and the establishment of the Australian frailty Network.

Professors Sarah Hilmer and Richard Lindley (University of Sydney) shared their work with pharmacology and frailty focussed and cardiogeriatric models of care.

Professors Andrew Mairoana (Curtin University) and Andrea Driscoll (Deakin University) joined us virtually to discuss prehabilitation and multidisciplinary management approaches respectively.

Some key takeaways from the workshop include:

- Frailty is highly prevalent in heart failure patients and serves as an independent predictor of rehospitalisation and mortality
- There exists a strong interconnection between frailty and heart failure, suggesting potential mutual causation
- There is an urgent need for further research into strategies to improve and/or reverse frailty in patients with heart failure

The next steps for the group will be to develop a Roadmap and action plan.

We'd also like to thank the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute for hosting the workshop in Sydney.

Hypertension Taskforce



A fruitful National Hypertension Taskforce and working groups meeting was held last week in Melbourne, led by Professors Alta Schutte and Markus Schlaich. The Taskforce is currently finalising the national Hypertension Roadmap, a comprehensive plan aimed at improving hypertension control rates in Australia from 32% to 70% by 2030, aligning with benchmarks set by other high-income

countries. The official launch of the National Hypertension Roadmap is scheduled for Q1 2024.

In the year since the Taskforce was launched, it has identified ten key priorities and established five working groups to address them. It was great to hear from the working group co-leads on their progress and plans for 2024. The established working groups to date are:

1. Developing Up-to-Date, Simple BP Management Tools for Healthcare Providers

Co-leads: Professors Michael Stowasser & Charlotte Hesse

2. Increasing Patient Activation and Engagement

Co-leads: Professor Liz Halcomb and Dr. Niamh Chapman

3. Raising and Maintaining Awareness at All Levels

Co-leads: Dr. Lisa Murphy & Dr. Quynh Nhu Dinh

4. Establishing a Systems and Data-Based Approach to BP Management

Co-leads: Professor James Sharman & Nelson Wang

5. Improving Detection (Screening) of People with Elevated BP to Identify Those at Risk

Co-leads: Professors Jun Yang and Martin Schultz

We extend our sincere gratitude to everyone involved for their valuable contributions and unwavering commitment to improving hypertension control in Australia. We look forward to further successes in 2024 as we work together towards our shared goal.

ACvA Precision Medicine Flagship Symposium

The ACvA Precision Medicine Flagship Symposium last Friday 8 December was a huge day with three sessions, 24 speakers and over 80 attendees. The Symposium brought together industry and research experts to discuss cutting-edge innovation in cardiovascular and stroke precision medicine, emerging opportunities and challenges within the field, and the integration of precision medicine into clinical practice.

Congratulations to Jayden Lee Roberts of the Australian National Phenome Centre, Murdoch University who won best poster for his work on 'Rapid and Self-Administrable Capillary Blood Sampling is Functionally Equivalent to Standard Venous Collections for NMR-Based Lipoprotein Analysis' and Dr Chai Ng from the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, winner of the best presentation for his work on 'Improving the Genetic Diagnosis for KCNH2-related Long QT Syndrome'.

We'd like to thank the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute, La Trobe University, Novo Nordisk, CSL Trajan and 23 Strands for their generous support. We'd also like to thank the Organising Committee for putting together such a rich program and all speakers and presenters for sharing their insights and expertise.



Big Data Flagship Expressions of Interest



The ACvA **Big Data Flagship** is inviting expressions of interests for researchers to join their Advisory Group. As an Advisory Group member, you will work with other members and the co-Directors to enhance the country's Big Data capability and capacity.

Ideal candidates should possess enthusiasm as team players, be keen to actively contribute to the expansion of the Big Data Flagship and actively support the development of a data strategy for cardiovascular disease (CVD) and stroke, contributing insights across all the ACvA's strategic initiatives.

Early Mid-Careers Researchers are strongly encouraged to apply.
Terms of Reference are available [HERE](#).

Applications should include a two-page track record and a cover letter, including contact details of two referees.

The cover letter should address each of the items below: (no more than 250 words for each)

- Enthusiasm and dedication to advancing awareness for CV research in Australia.
- Proven scientific excellence and/or technical excellence in one or more areas of cardiovascular research.
- Three priorities that you would like to see the Big Data Flagship achieve in the next three years and how your skills and experience can be applied to achieve your goals.

Please submit applications to acva@ozheart.org by **COB Friday 15 December 2023**.

For further information please email: Kerry.doyle@ozheart.org

Scientific Advisory Committee EOI - Working to improve cardiovascular and stroke outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have significantly higher rates of cardiovascular disease and stroke compared with non-Indigenous Australians. That is why across all our initiatives - [Clinical Theme Initiative](#), [Health Leadership Research Forum](#) and [capacity building](#), we have the core objective of improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.



The ACvA's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) was established in September 2023 to provide advice to the ACvA Board and support these programs and initiatives to achieve the overall vision of building a vibrant sustainable research ecosystem serving health and the economy.

At its initial meeting, SAC members agreed that enabling SAC members to support the objective of improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health was imperative in fulfilling its objectives and aligning with the principles of its establishment.

As one step in this endeavour, we are seeking Expressions of Interest from a First Nation's researcher working in cardiovascular disease or stroke and/or from researchers endorsed by community(ies), as being deeply engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia.

Applications close 22 December. You can find all the details [HERE](#).

SECTOR ACTIVITIES AND UPDATES

Cardio-oncology HMRI Award winners

On Friday 8 December Professors Aaron Sverdlov, Doan Ngo and their team at the Centre of Excellence in Cardio-oncology won the Hunter Medical Research Institute Foundation Research Team Excellence Award for 2023. Professor Sverdlov and Ngo also lead the ACvA's Cardio-oncology Special Interest Group and it's great to see them celebrated for their work establishing Australia's first clinical cardio-oncology service that has served over 1500 patients in the last 4 years, leading to measurable improvements in patient outcomes and quality of life.



Professor Ngo was also the [2022 ACvA Excellence in Cardiovascular Research Game Changer Award winner](#).

New Cardiovascular Research Network launched in Victoria

The Victorian Cardiovascular Research Network (Vic CVRN) was officially launched on 5 December. Deakin University hosted an evening showcase of cardiovascular research from fundamental discovery through to the patient experience.

The lived experience panel brought many in the audience to tears with their openness and honesty in sharing their stories. Victorian



research was highlighted in a *Bench to Bedside to Beachside* session featuring basic, clinical, allied health and public health researchers from institutions across the state.

The evening concluded with a lively networking session.

Twelve months in the making, the Vic CVRN has been established with support from the Heart Foundation and the Stroke Foundation. It aims to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration and networking across Victorian institutions and to promote cardiovascular research and translation for the benefit of the Victorian population.

For further information contact viccvrn@heartfoundation.org.au.

WACRA Awards



The Western Australian Cardiovascular Research Alliance (WACRA) welcomed members for their inaugural Awards night on 23 November. Led by the WACRA EMCR committee, and held at the University of Western Australia, the event showcased outstanding leaders in the Western Australian cardiovascular research community.

They were joined by distinguished guests including Honourable Tjorn Sibma MLC and Heart Foundation Chief Executive Officer David Lloyd. Board Director and consumer advocate Ayden Glover delivered a special address sharing his lived experience and appreciation for cardiovascular research to improve lives.

Several awards were presented to researchers in recognition of their contribution and impact in research and beyond. Emerita Professor Billie Giles-Corti received the Lifetime Achievement Award for her career achievements in urban design and planning cities for healthy living.

We would like to further congratulate all awardees for 2023, including Dr Hadi Afsharan (Publication Award), Dr Lakshini Herat (Research Impact Award), A/Prof Joshua Lewis (Research Leadership Award and Researcher of the Year Award) and Dr Elena De-Juan Pardo (Mentor Award).



South Australian Cardiovascular Showcase & Mentor Dinner



November was a big month showcasing and celebrating the quality cardiovascular research occurring in South Australia. On Thursday 16 November the SA CVRN hosted a mentor dinner *Developing a successful career in cardiovascular research*. The room was brimming with researchers representing diverse disciplines, backgrounds, institutions and career stages. A highlight of the evening was the roving microphone (thanks Adrian Elliott), featuring insightful and at times comedic interviews with esteemed mentors such as Prof Chris Semsarian, Prof John Cleland, Prof Rebecca Ritchie, Prof Sally Inglis, A/Prof Peter Psaltis, Prof Prashanthan Sanders and A/Prof Christina Bursill.



The following day marked the annual SA Cardiovascular Showcase, with over 120 registrations. The day commenced with two compelling personal stories shared by Uncle Moogy Major Sumner and Prof Richard Hillis. Dr Michael Cusack, Chief Medical Officer SA Health, provided an update on the Health and Medical Research Strategy and the significance of cardiovascular research in SA.

The program included a mix of presentations, panels and Q&A sessions from international, national and local leaders in cardiovascular research, alongside emerging talents in the field. The event concluded with recognition of outstanding posters spanning the research pipeline, including basic science, clinical, public health and a People's Choice and Consumer Award.

These events highlighted the many strengths of the SA research community including an encouraging cohort of emerging leaders. Their collective focus now shifts to ensuring robust support for the sector to maximize outcomes for the broader community.

If you're not a SA CVRN member, you can join [today](#).

New South Wales CVRN

The NSW CVRN held their final Rising Stars Seminar for 2023 on Friday 10 November, with over 30 people in attendance. Facilitated and hosted by EMCRs, the aim of the Rising Stars Seminar series is to provide emerging EMCRs, with the opportunity to participate as an invited speaker at a cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional event. The seminars are followed by networking and refreshments. If you're interested in presenting at one of the 2024 seminars, please email cvrn@heartfoundation.org.au.



The NSW CVRN Masterclass on consumer involvement was held on Thursday 16 November where attendees enjoyed hearing from Dr Nicola Straiton (Nursing Research Institute), Carrie Hayter (Health Consumers NSW), Prof Caleb Ferguson (UOW), and consumers Brenda Booth and Diane Trickett. There will be more Masterclasses in 2024.

The NSW CVRN team enjoyed sponsoring and exhibiting at the 2023 Sydney Cardiovascular Symposium on 30 November – 1 December. Co-Chair of the Rising Stars Sub-Committee, Dr Jessica Orchard, spoke about the important role the NSW CVRN plays in building cardiovascular research capacity and supporting EMCRs. Congratulations to the HRI and VCCRI on organising a wonderful event.

Monday 19 February 2024 on Gadigal Country, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, 5.15 – 9.30pm.



Join the NSW CVRN, the Heart Foundation and NSW Government, for an evening of networking, knowledge sharing and recognition of research excellence at the **2024 CVRN Showcase and Awards Ceremony**. The Showcase theme, First Nations heart health, will be addressed by an esteemed panel of NSW researchers working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people to improve health

outcomes through community-led approaches.

Registration will be opening soon.

(Artwork by Aboriginal Artist Belinda Coe @galari_creative)

Research Culture paper

Previous ACvA Emerging Leader Committee Chair A/Professor Francine Marques recently published [Rethinking Culture to Unlock the Potential of Medical Research](#) in *Hypertension* citing work done by the ACvA ELC in 2021 around career sustainability for EMCRs.

Frailty & Heart Failure Study

Dr Julee McDonagh is seeking clinicians and researchers with expertise in frailty and/or heart failure (HF) care, for a co-design study exploring interventions to improve frailty in adults living with heart failure.

This study aims to undertake a comprehensive co-design process with end-users, (consumers with frailty and HF, clinicians, researchers, expert professionals, stakeholders, and opinion leaders) to understand their preferences, opinions, and suggestions regarding an intervention to improve frailty in adults living with HF.



If you are a clinician, researcher, or expert professional with expertise in the management of frailty in adults with heart failure and you would be happy to join two virtual co-design workshops (approx. 90 mins each) please register your interest [HERE](#).

For further information email: Julee.McDonagh@health.nsw.gov.au

Perspectives of using genetic information to tailor nutrition interventions for people living with heart disease study

Emerging research has highlighted a relationship between diet and genetics, suggesting that individuals may benefit more from personalised dietary recommendations based on their genetics.

Nutrition and genetic researchers at the University of Newcastle are conducting a brief (5-10min) survey and optional interview for consumers and clinicians around their thoughts, experience and input on using genetic information to tailor nutrition interventions for people living with heart disease.

You can get involved by completing the survey [HERE](#).

If you have any questions, please email Erin.Clarke@newcastle.edu.au.

As members, you are the ACvA, so please let us know if you have any cardiovascular research news, events, jobs or training which you'd like to share.

Email nina.cullen@ozheart.org

Tag us in your posts so we can help spread the word:

[@OzCvA \(Twitter\)](#)

[@Australian Cardiovascular Alliance \(LinkedIn\)](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS & TRAINING



[7th International 4 Corners of Cardiology](#) / Melbourne / 16-17 February 2024

[Science Meets Parliament](#) / Canberra / 20-21 March 2024

[World Heart Summit](#) / Geneva / 24 – 26 May 2024

[Medical Device Partnering Program \(MDPP\)](#) / Adelaide / ongoing

GRANTS & OPPORTUNITIES



[Head of Members and Community](#)

[Franklin Women](#) / Sydney / 17 December

This role will foster and grow the strong community spirit that exists between Franklin Women and its members, as well its network of subscribers and engaged followers. Together these represent a diverse community of women working in different roles, organisations and career levels across the health and

medical research ecosystem, as well as their allies.

MRFF 2023 Targeted Translation Research Accelerator – Cardiovascular Disease and Diabetes Drugs and Devices

MRFF / Australia / 7 February 2024

This grant provides organisations with funding for partnering with small to medium enterprises (SMEs) to accelerate into practice promising drugs and devices focused on cardiovascular disease and the complications of diabetes (types 1 and 2).

2023 International Clinical Trial Collaborations Grant Opportunity

NHMRC / Australia / 7 February 2024

Applications to this grant opportunity must propose a clinical trial in Australia in collaboration with international counterparts. The clinical trial should not have commenced recruitment at the Australian trial site/s.

Prime Minister's Prizes for Science

The Department of Industry / Australia / 8 February 2024

The Prime Minister's Prizes for Science award Australian scientists and innovators with prizes to recognise outstanding achievements in science and research-based innovation and commercialisation.

2023 Indigenous Health Research Grant Opportunity

NHMRC / Australia / 6 March 2024

The Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Indigenous Health Research Fund aims to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 11 years from 2018–19 to 2028–29.

CSIRO Kick-Start Program

CSIRO / Australia / apply at any time

The CSIRO Kick-Start program provides matched funding to Australian start-ups and very small SME's to utilise CSIRO expertise to undertake research activities that will enable your business to:

- research a new idea with commercial potential
- develop a novel or improved product or process
- test a novel product or material